

VZCZCXRO4160
RR RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHBC #0050/01 1481706
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 271706Z MAY 08
FM REO BASRAH
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0334
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0751
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNRAO/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0788

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000050

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/27/2018

TAGS: PGOV ECON IR I2

SUBJECT: TRIBAL LEADER FAULTS GOI FOLLOW-UP TO COK, PLANS RUN FOR PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

REF: A) BASRAH 040; (B) BASRAH 028; (C) BASRAH 025

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CLASSIFIED BY: Howell Howard, Director, Regional Embassy Office Basrah, Dept. of State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (d)

¶1. (S/REL MCFI) SUMMARY: During a meeting held May 21 at the Basrah REO with Sheikh Mansur Tamimi, leader of the Bani Tamim tribe, Mansur said the lack of progress on reconstruction was eroding the popular support for the GOI and ISF engendered by the Charge of the Knights (COK) operation. Though the security situation remained stable, he questioned whether the ISF had the resources to sustain their gains and stated that the militias may now be regrouping and rearming in preparation for a new offensive. He expressed frustration with the lack of GOI support for his Tribal Support Battalion authorized during the Charge of the Knights (COK) operation.

¶2. (S/REL MCFI) SUMMARY CONTINUED: Regarding the upcoming provincial elections, Sheikh Mansur was critical of OMS and the incumbents, including Fadhila, but expressed particular disdain for the ISCI/Badr/Hizbullah/Sayyed al-Shuhada/Tharallah bloc. Sheikh Mansur has registered his own political bloc, the Iraqi Unity Assembly, which will comprise ten different tribes under a nationalist, multi-confessional banner. While optimistic about the chances of independent candidates, Sheikh Mansur warned that the Iranians would make every effort to co-opt, influence or intimidate independents prior to the upcoming elections. END SUMMARY.

FRUSTRATION WITH THE GOI

¶3. (C/REL MCFI) In a meeting held on May 21 at the Basrah Regional Embassy Office (REO), Sheikh Mansur of the Bani Tamim tribal confederation revealed his extreme disappointment with the GOI, stating that the promises of financial and material support offered by the GOI (Ref B) in the initial days of COK campaign for his tribesman have to date amounted to nothing. Revealing that the GOI has neither paid his men nor issued any resources (salaries, weapons, ammunition, living quarters or uniforms), Sheikh Mansur came across as a man betrayed, and openly doubted whether he could keep his battalion together much longer. So far, no other tribal battalion has been stood up except for one in Qurnah.

¶4. (C/REL MCFI) Claiming that IRGC-QF sleeper cells still remain in Basrah, Mansur appeared particularly concerned that those militia elements that had fled Basrah after COK may be regrouping and rearming, and he stated that soon they could launch a new offensive. While admitting that the ISF has been doing a good job maintaining security, he questioned whether they had the resources to maintain their presence, sharing that

he has seen soldiers sleeping in the streets because the ISF does not have adequate shelter and claiming that ISF commanders have asked him on numerous occasions to provide supplies for their men. (Note: New Basrah Operations Center commander General Mohammed disputed this in a May 24 meeting, Septel. End Note.)

15. (C/REL MCFI) The lack of reconstruction since COK has been particularly frustrating to the sheikh, who openly questioned the competence of acting Justice Minister Safa al-Safi, tasked by the PM to oversee the distribution of \$100 million in emergency reconstruction funds (Ref A). Claiming that he has personally submitted a list of recommendations to Safi, Mansur bemoaned that nothing has been done to date, and in his estimation Basrawis were growing extremely frustrated with the slow pace of reconstruction; this frustration was eroding the positive feelings they had developed for the GOI following COK. If something were not done soon, Mansur said that people would be less willing to cooperate with the GOI. (Note: al-Safi has yet to produce a list of projects that he and his Committee of Deputy Ministers will execute in Basrah. End Note.)

UPCOMING PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

16. (S/REL MCFI) Sheikh Mansur posited that if the GOI Election Commission (IHEC) plays an impartial role and if the security situation remains stable, then the elections should proceed smoothly. With free and fair elections, all of the incumbents affiliated with the main political blocs will be voted out of office, he predicted. Sharing his views about the growing popularity of independents in Basrah, Sheikh Mansur said that this stemmed from the contempt that many Basrawis had for the incumbent parties, particularly Fadhiba, OMS, and the House of Five, all of whom had done nothing to improve Basrah. Acknowledging that he has registered his own political party, the Iraqi Unity Assembly, he revealed that it was comprised of ten different tribes and will run under a nationalist,

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multi-confessional banner.

17. (S/REL MCFI) The Iranians view Basrah as the most significant province in the upcoming elections and will spare no effort to obtain a favorable result, Mansur asserted. Iran fears the potential power of the independents, and he claimed that they are already working through ISCI/Badr to bring independent candidates into their fold. Other Iranian techniques will include offering funding to independent candidates or intimidation. He also claimed that Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are already attempting to counter Iranian efforts in Basrah.

18. (S/REL MCFI) COMMENT: Mansur's is not the only tale of tribal battalion abandonment; the Qurnah area tribal battalion also has received no support (Septel). Likewise, his warnings about ISCI/Badr/Iranian election maneuvering have been echoed by other contacts (Septels). Sheik Mansur has been among the staunchest GOI supporters and his tribe took on militants by themselves during COK (Ref C); it is not a good sign if GOI support is now wavering. Mansur has been selected for a visit of Iraqi sheikhs for an International Visitors' program in early June that is planned to include a meeting with the President. End Comment.

HOWARD